

Nothing Wrong With Heavy Eyelids by The72nd

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Summary:

El's been having trouble sleeping lately, and a thunderstorm is bringing back some bad memories.

Nothing Wrong With Heavy Eyelids

Author's Note:

Hey! I don't usually write fan fiction, but I've been obsessed with this show since July, and I couldn't not write something! I love these kids too much. Please leave a comment letting me know what you think. Thanks!

Eleven gripped the supercom tightly in her hands and looked over at the clock. It was 2:47 in the morning. She took a deep breath. The storm had been relentless for hours now. Heavy rain slapped hard against the windows, and the basement was dark but for the occasional illuminating lightning flash. The night light, usually plugged in and glowing by the stairs, had gone out with the rest of the electricity.

El had been having trouble sleeping anyway, and the storm certainly wasn't helping things. As much as she knew she was safe there, in the Wheeler's basement, she still flinched at every clap of thunder. She hated it, being afraid. After all that she'd been through, it didn't feel fair that every flicker of the lights still sent her into a panic. Most nights she'd lie awake on the couch for hours, living in fear of what she'd see when she closed her eyes. Even on nights when she could sleep, it wouldn't be long before she'd find herself jerking awake, tears in her eyes and a silent scream on her lips. She'd had nightmares before, but they seemed worse since she'd gotten back, more frequent.

Her dreams were of the lab mostly. She'd dream of the dark room, of papa, the bath, or the day she escaped. Sometimes, though, they were worse. Some nights there'd be no monsters or bad men in her dreams, just a crippling loneliness. She'd dream that all of her new friends, her family, would leave her. She'd dream that they'd finally realize what she had always felt nagging in the back of her mind, that she didn't belong. She never had. Mocking voices would scream at her, asking how she could ever think they actually liked her. Saying she was nothing but a lab rat. An experiment. She'd wake, trembling, and never could go back to sleep on those nights.

A loud clap of thunder shook the Windows and her fists clenched around the radio. It had been a gift from the boys, reminding her she was one of them. She thumbed over the button on the side and blinked tears out of her eyes, trying to control her breathing. You're safe here, she reminded herself. It's just a storm. everything's alright no-

CRASH

Another rumble shook the house and she felt hot tears start to form. She brought her trembling hand closer to her face and pressed the big button on the side of the supercom.

"...Mike?" Her voice sounded frail, even to her, and she sniffed back a sob. She let her hand down and waited. There was no reply for a while, and just as she was thinking about pressing the button again the radio hissed to life.

"El? Was that you?"

She nodded, even though he couldn't see her, "Yes."

Mike sat up quickly on the other end, his voice suddenly very concerned. "What is it? Are you alright?"

"Could...Could you come down here? Please?"

Another flash of lightning lit up the basement.

"Are you hurt? Do I need to get my mom?"

"No. I just-" she exhaled deeply, "I'm... scared."

"Okay. I'm coming down. Over and out."

Mike rushed out of his bed, making sure to grab his flashlight, and quietly walked past Nancy's room and down the stairs. The house was dark, the rain against the Windows the only thing breaking the silence. He reached the basement door and opened it slowly. The stairs creaked as he walked down them and started to make his way towards the couch.

"El?" He spoke in a hushed tone, "Is everything okay?"

She was sitting up on the couch now, the blanket pulled around her shoulders and the radio sitting next to her. She managed a sad smile upon seeing him, but the first thing he noticed were the tears in her eyes.

"I-I'm sorry I woke you up, Mike"

He shook his head and fidgeted with his flashlight "don't worry about it. I was pretty much awake anyways. Working on a campaign."

She knew that wasn't entirely the truth, but she felt like maybe some lies were okay, small ones, if they helped your friends feel better. Mike sat down on the couch next to her, but not too close. He seemed nervous. Another clap of thunder suddenly sent her heart racing. She squeezed her eyes shut tight.

"It's the storm, isn't it?"

She turned her gaze over to him. Mike was looking at her intently, and she knew, like usual, that he really cared. Mike always listened, and he never laughed at her when she didn't know something, like Lucas or Dustin sometimes would. She nodded.

"Yeah. I used to be scared of thunderstorms too."

Her brow furrowed. "Not anymore?"

"No, I guess not." He said, shaking his head.

"Why not?"

He thought about it for a minute. "Well, I guess there's not really anything to be scared of, you know? It's just loud noise. Plus Nancy got me this cool book all about weather cycles and stuff."

"Weather cycles?"

"Yeah. Like rain, and clouds and all that. I think it makes it less scary once you know how it works. You could read it too if you want."

She nodded enthusiastically. She would take anything that might help, and the idea of learning about the weather was exciting to her. Even though it had been months that she'd been living with the

Wheelers, there was still so much she didn't know, constant questions crowding her mind.

Mike started to stand up. "Here, I can go get it if you-"

She leaned forward and grabbed his arm, shaking her head. "Stay."

"Oh. Sure thing." He sat back down, a soft smile on his face. El smiled back at him and scooted closer, leaning her head on his shoulder. She was instantly taken back to that night in the school, almost 4 months ago. She thought about it a lot, the conversation she'd had with Mike in the cafeteria, before the bad men and the demogorgon and the upside down. When there was just the two of them. Sometimes she would remember the nervous smile on Mike's face right after he kissed her and her chest would feel all tight.

She'd learned that word from Nancy, kissing, when El had seen Steve kiss her and asked about it. It still seemed so strange to her. Mike had never mentioned it again, and she was never quite able to muster up the courage to try. What if he didn't "like" her anymore? What if he laughed at her? She sighed and stared at the floor, wishing she could just say things like the others could. Everyone said she was improving, but it was still hard sometimes to force the words out. Ideas and questions would sit stubbornly glued to the roof of her mouth, like peanut butter, and long sentences sometimes felt like running a marathon.

"Hey, El?" Mike prompted, picking up on her frustration, like he always could.

She looked up at him inquisitively.

"If you ever wanna...talk about anything" he paused, searching for the words, "I just want you to know that I'm here, okay?"

He grabbed her hand and gave it a small squeeze.

She felt that familiar tightness in her chest and squeezed back.

"Thank you." Her eyes suddenly drifted to the floor again and she sat up, letting go of his hand. She took a deep breath, trying to organize her thoughts in her head. She felt nervous about telling the truth. Friends don't lie, she reminded herself, it had become sort of a

mantra.

"I..." She paused "I don't sleep, most nights." She was withdrawn to the other side of the couch now. "Nightmares."

Concern filled Mike's voice.

"Nightmares? You mean like, of the-"

She nodded and spoke quietly.

"The lab. The upside down." She didn't want to tell Mike about her other dreams, not yet. It was hard enough for her to talk about her past, like every time she mentioned those days she was taking another step further from being normal. She tried not to think about it, but reminders of those years of her life seemed to be everywhere. She still couldn't look at a Coke can without flashes.

She felt Mike's hand rest gently on her shoulder and looked over at him. Wordlessly, he pulled her into a hug, like that day she'd saved him from falling, or when she'd come back bedraggled from the upside down. It was an incredible comfort, Like the world slowed around her.

She let out her tears now. Down her cheeks and onto Mike's shoulder, it was a sweet release, feeling pent up anxiety and pain flow out freely.

"You're safe now." He said softly, and she nodded in between sobs. They stayed like that for a while, the rain still falling outside, until eventually she pulled away. She wiped the last tears from her eyes and smiled her gentle smile.

"Thank you"

"You should really get some sleep, El."

"Will you stay? Please?"

"Yeah, of course I will." He stood up, "I'll just...sleep in this chair. I've done it before anyways."

"Okay"

He scooted the chair next to the couch and sat down, leaning back and propping his head up with a pillow. She reached out and grabbed his hand again, giving it a soft squeeze, before laying back down on the couch.

"Night, El"

"Goodnight, Mike"

The thunder boomed again, and she flinched, but Eleven wasn't as scared this time. She focused on Mike's steady breathing, and the rain on the Windows, and it wasn't long before she fell asleep. And for the first time in too long, she woke with a smile.

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading! Like I said, I don't usually write fanfic, so this is kind of new ground for me. Please let me know what you thought.